

E-9,106
S-9,501

JUN 4 1968

Texan Plays Taps In Washington

One Final Sound On Bugle

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The Lufkin News

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WASHINGTON —

How informal and irregular have been reports made to the watchdog committee of Congress by the Central Intelligence Agency in the past was revealed here in a press conference by Sen. John Stennis, D., Miss., chairman of the Senate Preparedness subcommittee, and a member of the Senate's Armed Services and Appropriations committees.

Senator Stennis is believed to be the successor designate to the Senate's strong man, Richard B. Russell, D., Ga., chairman of its Armed Services committee and second man on the Appropriations Committee.

Stennis made it emphatic — he is opposed to the proposal of Sen. J. William Fulbright, D., Ark., and Sen. Eugene McCarthy, D., Minn., and others that members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee be added to the small group from Senate Armed Forces Services Appropriations committees which watchdogs the CIA. The Foreign Relations Committee takes the view that the CIA sometimes gets into the position of starting conflicts, overthrowing foreign governments or stabilizing them.

They think the Foreign Relations Committee ought to be kept informed, since these are matters they are supposed to pass on first for the Senate. As Senator McCarthy said, the CIA can and has done some things in foreign relations that are not supposed to be done without the approval of Congress.

Senator Stennis said he was unalterably opposed to adding Foreign Relations Committee members to the watchdog group. He opposes it strictly because he says it is against the rules of the Senate, under which certain jurisdictions are assigned to a committee. He said it is totally unfitting and against all precedent for a committee to come in and by simple majority of the Senate move to add to its duties.

Besides, he said, the CIA is so secretive and so unusual that its activities should not be the subject of public debate. "It is so different. If we follow the regular ritual with it and force public disclosure of its activities as we do other government agencies, then we will destroy the CIA."

There is another reason, too — "There has never been a leak from the watchdog committee," he said.

But when pressed by questioners as to whether the watchdog committee of members from Armed Services and Appropriations ever really met as a committee, Stennis disclosed that it had been the pattern for some one from CIA from time to time to gain Russell's ear and report to him. Russell, as agent for Armed Services and Appropriations, being an expert himself, and with his high rank, to control these two groups, (particularly in view of the ailing health of the 86-year-old chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Carl Hayden, of Ariz.), would reassure the CIA or accept their word for things.

Then Stennis disclosed that last year when Russell was ill for some time himself and Stennis was acting head of the Armed Services Committee, he became concerned about his own responsibility in connection with the CIA, and thus he called together a committee meeting on the subject. It probably came as a shock to the CIA. In this way, other members of the committee had a chance to learn what was going on and to share in the blame and the knowledge.

But the inference was left that when Russell returned, the CIA went back to their old practice of one man, one ear.

Who else in government acts as a check on the CIA?

Stennis said "The CIA is under the direct control of the President and the National Security Council. The Security Council passes on all of its activities."

Asked if the watch dog committees of Congress could not keep closer watch in future, Stennis said "it could be with staff that will come."